Fall 2008

# Mobility Matters

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN THE NJTPA REGION

*Investing in Our Well-Being*

# Safety Comes First

Improving travel safety is the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's highest priority. The region's extensive road and rail network offers a high degree of mobility for residents—but not without risk. Particularly on the road network, crashes resulting in injury or death are a small but real possibility. Minimizing that risk through investments of transportation tax dollars—adding pedestrian crosswalks, paving roads with non-skid materials, eliminating dangerous curves, installing brighter lighting, making signs more visible and a host of other measures, large and small—is the focus of a number of NJTPA funding programs.

This issue of *Mobility Matters* highlights these programs and some of the progress being made towards improving traffic safety in the region.

## *Trends*

Motor vehicle crashes cause more than 40,000 deaths per year nationwide, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. That's about one fatality every 12.5 minutes. Crashes are the leading cause of death for people ages 2 to 33.

In the NJTPA region:

• The number of overall crashes reported in the NJTPA region declined each year between 2003 and 2006, from 248,521 to 223,923. Total crashes climbed back up to 232,526 in 2007, although that number was still well below previous years.

• Injuries from vehicle crashes have also declined recently. The overall number of injury crashes dropped each year from 2003 to 2007, from 59,861 to 50,391 last year.

• The number of fatalities has remained fairly constant in recent years at about 441 annually, despite a steady rise in the miles of vehicle travel.

So programs to improve travel safety appear to be having an effect—at least at keeping fatalities and injuries in check.

There also has been a growing awareness of the need to protect the most vulnerable road users—namely pedestrians and bicyclists. In 2006, pedestrians accounted for 21 percent of the region's traffic fatalities (compared with 11 percent nationally), even though walking is the mode of travel for less than 10 percent of the region's trips. However, rising fuel prices and a growing consciousness of protecting the environment are likely to encourage more bicycle and pedestrian travel in the future.

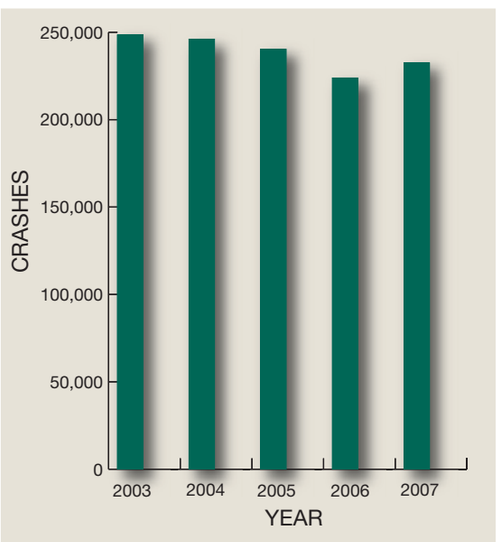
## *Top Priority*

Strategies employed by the NJTPA to improve safety focus on modifying the region's infrastructure and rely heavily on

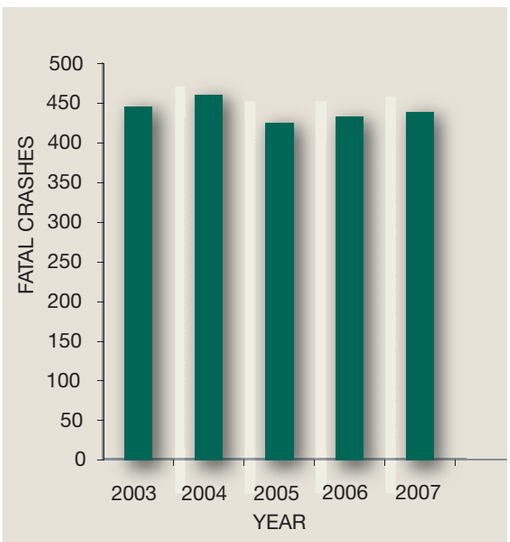
*Continued on page 2*

## *Crashes & Fatalities Remain About Level, Despite More Driving*

***Crashes in NJTPA Region***




***Fatal Crashes in NJTPA Region***



### *Safety Comes First*

*Cont'd from page 1*

interagency cooperation to be most effective. But strategies involving vehicles and drivers also are vital. Safety features on vehicles—particularly air bags—have contributed greatly to minimizing crash injuries. Strategies focused on driver behavior include education programs for new drivers, law enforcement (such as Click It or Ticket) and regulations governing driver testing, among others.

The NJTPA's infrastructure investments seek to integrate safety features into all transportation projects. "Safety has to be the number one goal," said NJTPA Chairman Susan M. Zellman, a Sussex County Freeholder. "Of course we want to speed up our trips, but speed can't come at the expense of safety."

This emphasis reflects federal priorities. Congress passed the nation's principal transportation law, SAFETEA-LU (or the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) in 2005. It established a new core Highway Safety Improvement Program aimed at reducing highway fatalities. It also nearly doubled the allocations for infrastructure safety and required strategic highway safety planning, focusing on results.

The NJTPA undertakes studies of safety issues and trends in the region. It has created a regional crash database using data gathered by the New Jersey Department of Transportation from crashes reported to state and local police.

Crashes are considered reportable if they involve a human injury or death, or damage to the property of any one person in excess of $500. The NJTPA updates the database annually and makes it available for public use at www.njtpa.org.

Drawing on this data, the NJTPA targets investments to those projects that best improve safety. A numerical ranking system—the "project prioritization process"—is used to allocate funds among the large number of projects in line for funding each year. Proposed projects that address hazards at crash-prone locations receive higher rankings.

In this way, safety is a key factor in how the NJTPA allocates over $2 billion in transportation funding each year.

#### *Dedicated Safety Programs*

The NJTPA also sets aside funding for projects, programs and studies specifically dedicated to improving safety. From interstate highways to bike paths, rail crossings to truck stops, no area is taken for granted. Some recent NJTPA efforts include:

- The Regional Safety Priorities Update will help identify and recommend needed upgrades for 25 of the most crash-prone stretches of road in the NJTPA region.
- The Local Safety and High Risk Rural Roads Program focuses on funding relatively quick and simple fixes to problematic local and county roads.
- The North Jersey Truck Rest Stop Study revealed a major shortage of parking spaces at the region's rest stops and identified sites where expansion is possible. The availability of safe, convenient places for truck drivers to rest is vital to reducing driver fatigue and crashes.
- The Freight Rail Crossing Assessment Study identified potential remedies to address rail crossing safety and improve traffic flow at critical locations along major rail lines.
- Walkable Community Workshops help communities identify ways to improve and enhance pedestrian conditions.
- The New Jersey Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition, chaired by the NJTPA, has led educational outreach efforts aimed at reducing the roughly 5,000 such accidents that take place in the region each year.

These efforts draw on priorities in the NJTPA federally mandated long-range transportation plan. An update of the plan, entitled Regional Transportation Plan 2035, is now in preparation, with adoption scheduled in summer 2009. Safety will remain one of its top investment priorities. ●

## THE NJTPA

**The NJTPA is the federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 6.5 million people in the 13-county northern New Jersey region. Each year, the NJTPA oversees over $2 billion in transportation investments. The NJTPA evaluates and approves proposed transportation improvement projects and provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input into funding decisions. It also sponsors and conducts studies, assists county planning agencies and monitors compliance with national air quality goals. The NJTPA serves the fourth most populous MPO region in the country. The NJTPA Board consists of one elected official from each of the region's 13 counties and two largest cities, Newark and Jersey City. The Board also includes a Governor's Representative, the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Transportation, the Executive Directors of NJ Transit and the Port Authority of NY & NJ and a Citizens' Representative appointed by the Governor. NJTPA Board meetings are held bi-monthly and are open to the public.**

# Mobility Matters

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# Putting "Doe" Toward Deer Crash Awareness

It's 1:30 p.m. on a typical May Thursday for Glen Kocsis. He's driving along a familiar road, Route 18 in Neptune, Monmouth County between exits 10 and 8, when suddenly a frightened deer starts sprinting alongside his Chevy Tahoe.

"He started running with the traffic and I thought I was past him," recalled Kocsis, 36, a sheet metal worker from Long Branch. "But then, the deer cut right into the passenger side of my vehicle."

Fortunately, Kocsis wasn't hurt and no other vehicles were involved (although a van just missed the deer and its driver pulled over to see if Kocsis was OK). The deer, however, wasn't so lucky; the animal was killed in the crash, which also resulted in major damage to Kocsis' SUV, including dents, scratches, plus a broken window and mirror.

Deer-vehicle crashes like this one are a growing problem in suburban and rural areas. As deer populations increase, and residential development spreads, crashes with deer have become more prevalent in many locations, including northern and central New Jersey.

In fact, Kocsis' recent crash wasn't his first deer-vehicle encounter in the NJTPA region. He said about six years ago, he came upon a deer standing in the middle lane of the New Jersey Turnpike near Exit 8A in Middlesex County.

"I swerved and missed him but then I lost control of my car and hit the divider," Kocsis recalled. He said the police told him that it's safer to just hit the deer than to try to avoid it. Kocsis isn't so sure. "Back then I had a Pontiac Firebird and I was picturing the deer crashing up through the windshield . . . so, I don't even know what would be safer, to be honest."

In 2003, the year after Kocsis' first deer-vehicle incident, there were about 5,100 reported deer-vehicle crashes in the region, and, officials say, probably twice as many go unreported. While fatalities are rare, the risk of injury, costs incurred from vehicle damage (about $3,000 in Kocsis' case), and concerns about animal welfare make this an important safety issue and a challenge for transportation planners.

In response, the NJTPA has taken a number of initiatives. "The agency designated deer-vehicle crashes as a region-wide safety priority and worked with stakeholders at

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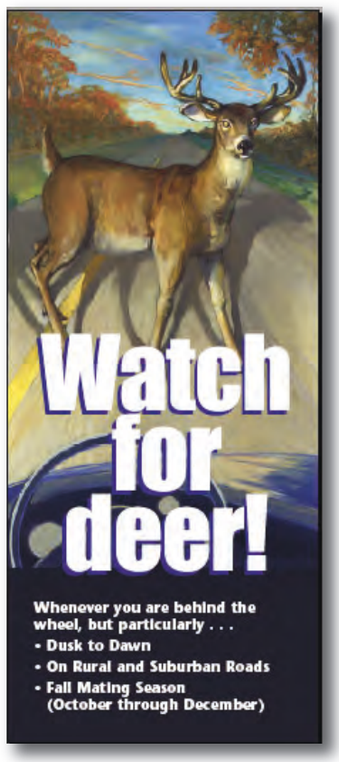

Watch for deer!
Whenever you are behind the wheel, but particularly . . .
• Dusk to Dawn
• On Rural and Suburban Roads
• Fall Mating Season (October through December)

OCTOBER 10th
put the
BRAKES on FATALITIES DAY!
HIGHWAY CRASHES CLAIM over
42,000 LIVES
EACH YEAR
nationwide ...
On October 10th, every driver is encouraged to be EXCEPTIONALLY CAREFUL so that, for at least one day, there will be NO FATALITIES on our roads.
this OCTOBER 10th, and EVERY DAY:
DRIVE as if YOUR LIFE DEPENDED on it!
For more information: www.brakesonfatalities.org

## New Jersey Hopes to Put the Brakes on Fatalities

On Oct. 10, New Jersey's motorists are asked to drive like their lives depended on it.

Drivers nationwide will participate in the eighth annual "Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day," an initiative that aims to achieve one full day without a traffic death by encouraging safer behavior and promoting safer roadways.

Police departments throughout the state will report all traffic crashes, injuries and fatalities that occur on Oct. 10 to the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety, which will compile this data and report on the initiative's outcome shortly after. On Oct. 10, 2007, there were 1,076 crashes on the state's roadways, two of them fatal. On the same day in 2006, there were 928 crashes, two fatal. The 2005 Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day saw 697 crashes, five of which were fatal.

"We're working towards a day when that count doesn't go up, and our highways are fatality free," New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety Director Pam Fischer said. "By continuing to reinforce the importance of buckling up, every ride; slowing down; avoiding aggressive driving practices and distractions behind the wheel; and never drinking and driving, we can achieve that goal."

Put The Brakes On Fatalities Day is coordinated by a coalition of more than 40 national safety organizations, federal, state and local government agencies (including the NJTPA) and private sector companies working together to reduce the death and injury toll of motor vehicle crashes.

For more information, visit the division's website at www.njsaferoads.com and click on the Put the Brakes on Fatalities icon to the right. The site contains helpful links, safe driving tips, promotional materials and posts a running count of fatal crashes that have taken place on New Jersey's roadways since Jan. 1.

***Deer Crash*** *cont'd from page 3*

the state, county, and local level to reduce their number. It's a serious safety issue that demands attention," said Warren County Freeholder Director John DiMaio, Chairman of the NJTPA's Planning & Economic Development Committee and NJTPA Second Vice Chairman.

The NJTPA also formed the New Jersey Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition (NJDVCC) in 2006. The coalition, chaired by NJTPA staff, includes New Jersey's Department of Transportation, Turnpike Authority, Division of Highway Traffic Safety and Department of Environmental Protection, as well as the American Automobile Association. County and local engineers, planners and law enforcement personnel also serve on the coalition.

The coalition's biggest effort to date has been an annual "Fall is Here-Watch for Deer!" public education campaign—which includes the distribution of flyers and magnetic bumper stickers at highway rest areas—to recommend driving behaviors that are most likely to reduce the severity of a crash involving deer (or other large animals) should these crashes be unavoidable. Plans for this fall's campaign are well underway.

*The NJTPA region sees about 5,000 deer-vehicle crashes each year.*

**New Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition**

As the coalition continues, future activities may include encouraging state and local engineers to routinely include safety measures to address deer vehicle crashes in roadway improvement projects.

Where possible, some counties and municipalities have already installed safety measures such as reflectors, fencing and signs. However, research has indicated that the only fully proven effective method for preventing deer-vehicle crashes is installing expensive 8-foot-high fencing along with complementary measures such as escape ramps and over/under-passes. The coalition is focusing more on its education campaigns and encouraging the implementation of alternative approaches to deer deterrence to keep the animals from entering the roadway.

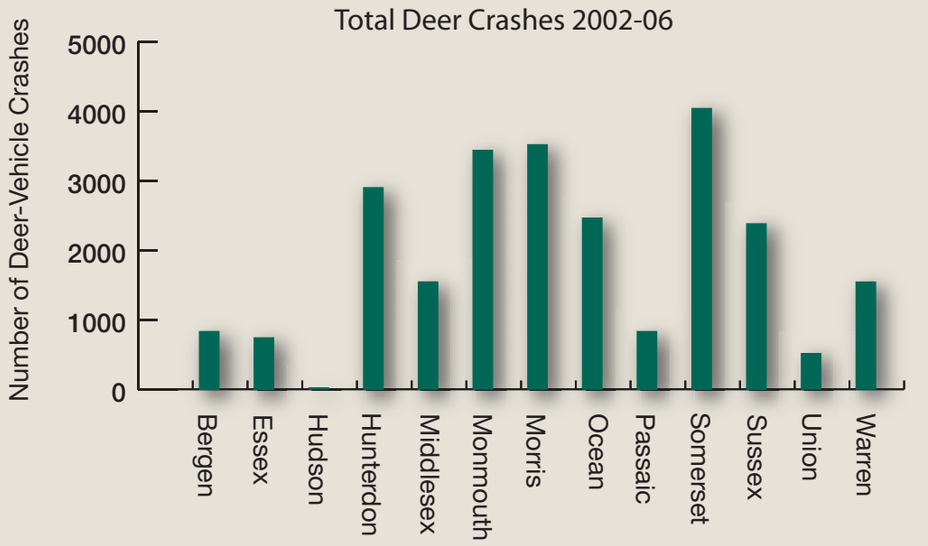
Kocsis said he doesn't remember seeing deer crossing signs or other similar devices prior to his recent crash, but he admits that, in his case, it might not have made a difference if there was a sign. "If I was new to the area, and I saw a sign, it probably would have; but I knew there were deer around there anyway," Kocsis said, adding he noticed another deer in the Route 18 median shortly after.

Now, with his second deer-vehicle crash still fresh in mind, Kocsis said he's all for any initiatives that could help prevent another one from happening. Kocsis also said he's taking a more cautious approach regarding known deer locations along the roads. "I've actually avoided Route 18 a couple of times since the crash."

For more on the New Jersey Deer Vehicle Crash Coalition,

## Where the Wild Things Are

Statistics show that most of the region's reported deer-vehicle crashes occur in the larger rural and suburban counties. Of the 13 counties in the NJTPA region, Somerset led each year from 2002 to 2006, averaging about 808 reported incidents annually. Morris and Monmouth counties were second and third in such crashes, with an average of about 704 and 687 per year respectively.




The lowest deer crash rates were reported in the region's smaller, more urban counties. Hudson County came in a distant last place, with only four such crashes per year, including just one in 2006. Union and Essex counties followed with 102 and 148 deer-vehicle crashes annually.

# Street Knowledge Key in Pedestrian Workshops

Nothing beats getting out and walking around to get to know a place. That's what the NJTPA had in mind when, in 2006, it launched a series of safety-themed "Walkable Community" workshops in northern and central New Jersey.

NJTPA Chairman Susan M. Zellman, a Sussex County Freeholder, attended one of the workshops held at the busy intersection of Routes 206 and 94 in Newton. "The idea was to also get out in the field – one location at a time – where you could actually see places where walking and pedestrian safety could be improved," Zellman said.

The workshops were held at selected locations (chosen by NJTPA staff in consultation with county and city officials) in each of the region's 13 counties and two largest cities. The half-day workshops were planned by the NJTPA and its consultants, RBA Group, to include four key components. First, there was an initial briefing by local stakeholders with a working knowledge of the area. Next, there was a presentation covering "best practices" of walkable communities in other locations.

From there, NJTPA staff, county and municipal planners, and law enforcement officers—as well as representatives from local businesses and schools—went on a guided walking tour, or "audit," of the actual study area. Afterward, a group discussion was held to come up with specific, real-world improvements aimed at increasing safety and accessibility for pedestrians.

The workshops became the basis for a list of potential solutions to address things like missing sidewalks, new or upgraded traffic signals, crosswalks, signs and traffic calming. Non-engineering solutions like enforcement and educational programs were also included.

The results of each workshop can now be used by local and county governments as a catalyst for making pedestrian and safety improvements and to develop "problem statements" that can be submitted to the NJTPA to be considered for future project funding.

*Dover officials examine a map as part of a Walkable Community workshop held there in 2006.*

*A group participates in a guided walking tour as part of a Walkable Community Workshop in Dover.*

"Even looking beyond the potential project recommendations, one of the key goals of the whole program was to train participants well enough so they could hold their own workshops and continue the program," said NJTPA planner Ron Tindall, adding that the program was developed after the NJTPA participated in a similar initiative conducted in 2006 by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council.

Tindall, the NJTPA's Walkable Community project manager, points to sessions held last year in Middlesex, Morris and Ocean counties, as well as another workshop earlier this year in Lincoln Park, Morris County.

"This has been so successful that the New Jersey Department of Transportation and other partner agencies, working with our same consultant team, are using our program as a model; they've committed to holding two more workshops in our region and more sessions in other jurisdictions before the end of the year," Tindall said.

The summary reports for 19 workshops held in the past two years are available through the NJTPA's website at www.njtpa.org.

# Left Turns and Other Hazards Addressed Through NJTPA Local Safety Program

Turning left through oncoming traffic can be a risky proposition. As the nation's most heavily traveled state, New Jersey has long sought to engineer roads to reduce left turn risks. It was the home of the first bi-level "cloverleaf" intersection—in Woodbridge connecting Routes 1/9 and 35—built in 1928 (since removed). The state also was among the first in the 1940's and 1950s to install "jughandle" turns in a big way. There were 160 in the state by 1960.

But the most cost effective approach to improving left turn safety has been dedicated left turn lanes. Left turn lanes generally don't demand extensive design work, engineering, or property acquisition, so they can usually be implemented quickly.

Many of the intersection improvements funded by the NJTPA through its safety programs include new or upgraded left turn lanes. An example is the left turn lane installed at the intersection of Mountain Avenue and Glenside Road in New Providence, Union County. The intersection was the site of 19 left turn crashes in a three-year period. The new turn lane, with a video camera vehicle detection system for controlling traffic lights at the intersection, was completed in May 2007 and has reduced traffic problems, according to county planners.

The $124,000 project was funded in part with $95,000 from the NJTPA Local Safety Program (costing $124,000 in total). Every year, the NJTPA solicits project proposals from its member cities and counties for quick-fix, high-impact improvements that can make travel safer. Some funding from this program is used to address project needs identified through the Regional Safety Priorities Update (see story on page 7).

In addition to left turn lanes, projects funded through the Local Safety Program have included traffic calming measures; crosswalks or other pedestrian safety improvements; reflective pole markers; and removal of fixed object hazards. "This is a real success story," says Warren County Freeholder Director John DiMaio, Chairman of the NJTPA's Planning & Economic Development Committee. "The Local Safety Program proves that effective transportation improvements don't have to be big-ticket projects like a bridge replacement."

The Local Safety Program has been expanded to include a new effort called the High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR) Program. A total of about $3 million has been made available in FY 2009 to fund their projects (see story below). The HRRR program will provide federal funds to address safety problems on rural roads where crash rates exceed the statewide average for similar types of roads.

*A cloverleaf intersection at County Routes 571 (Bay Avenue) and 549 (Hooper Avenue) in Toms River.*

## 2009 Local Safety and High Risk Rural Road Program Projects

Two NJTPA programs provide federal funds to counties and municipalities for improvements to dangerous traffic and pedestrian conditions that can be implemented quickly. The Local Safety Program funds construction of improvements to remedy documented safety hazards on county and local roads. The High Risk Rural Roads Program funds construction of safety projects on rural road segments identified to have a crash rate that exceeds the state average.

*The following Local Safety Program projects are being funded in FY 2009, totaling almost $2 million:*

**Bergen County: Safety Initiatives Along Kinderkamack Road in Oradell Business District**
Pedestrian and bike safety improvements to address crashes include installing pedestrian countdown signals (on existing signals) along several intersections, new stamped concrete pedestrian crosswalks, lighted crosswalks with mounted flashers and painted medians. $310,257

**Essex County: Pedestrian Upgrades for Park Avenue Corridor, East Orange**
Pedestrian safety improvements include upgrading traffic signals and installing high-visibility crosswalks, school crossing signs and pedestrian signals with countdown timers. $615,000

**Hudson County: Upgrades to Pedestrian Indicators on County Route 501/John F. Kennedy Boulevard in Jersey City, North Bergen and Union City**
John F. Kennedy Boulevard is a wide artery that runs the length of the county. Existing pedestrian signals on John F. Kennedy Boulevard (between Pamrapo and 15th streets) will be improved with new LED countdown indications.

**Morris County: Anti-Skid Application on Schooley's Mountain Road (County Route 517) in Washington**
Highly skid-resistant material will be applied directly to paved surfaces to reduce brak-

# NJTPA Works to Make Local Roads Safer

Sometimes simple solutions can make the difference between a hazardous drive and a cruise down Easy Street.

Take Berkeley Township's Mule Road, where traffic is stubborn and left turns were once too tricky for local drivers. The four-lane road, divided by curb-high cement medians, is lined with strip malls and serves as a connector route between a busy state highway (Route 37) and a county road (Dover Road). It is also heavily driven by residents of the area's many age-restricted communities, according to Ocean County Traffic Engineer Roden Lightbody.

There were 45 crashes reported on a 2.5-mile stretch of Mule Road in 2003. Some drivers told police they were confused about how to use left turn pockets that led through gaps in the medians. Crashes occurred when drivers tried to turn left from the center lane, cutting in front of cars using the turn pocket. Other times, drivers simply struggled to time their left turns past the oncoming traffic and were struck head-on, Lightbody said.

As part of the NJTPA's 2005 Regional Safety Priorities study, planners from the agency joined Ocean County and New Jersey Department of Transportation officials on a site visit and came up with some practical ideas to fix the problems. New lines and arrows were painted on the road, clarifying which lanes were for turns and which were for through traffic. Additional signs were installed near intersections to help clear up confusion. The left turn lane signals at these hotspots used to change from green arrows to regular green traffic lights, allowing drivers to continue turning at their own discretion; now they change from green arrows to yellow and red arrows, restricting turns to controlled time periods.

Work on these upgrades was recently finished, and while the numbers haven't come in yet, Lightbody said the difference is apparent. "So far, so good; I don't get anywhere near the number of calls I used to get," he said.

Reports suggesting ways to improve 25 more crash-prone local and county roads will soon be ready as part of the Regional Safety Priorities Update, which builds on the results of the 2005 study.

*A crash took place during a site visit by the project safety team in Little Silver, Monmouth County.*

In March, a consultant electronically mapped more than 840,000 crash sites in northern and central New Jersey, and the data was used to identify half-mile stretches which experienced the most crash activity. Some of those areas were evaluated using a scoring system that considers factors like crashes per million vehicles, types of crashes (truck, bicycle, deer, etc.) and severity (fatal crashes were given more weight than simple property damage). Using this process, a list of over 1,000 high-risk locations emerged.

By working with county representatives, the NJTPA selected 25 sites for "mini safety audit" visits to identify potential improvements. The visits were coordinated over the spring with local officials, police and other stakeholders. The 25 initiatives are documented in reports that include a description of suggested improvements, a cost estimate and an identification of the appropriate agency responsible for implementation. Some potential improvements may be eligible for funding through the NJTPA's Local Safety Program (see story on page 6).

A report containing final recommendations for the 25 Regional Safety Priorities Update locations is expected to be concluded soon and posted on www.njtpa.org this fall.

ing distance and the likelihood of hydroplaning on wet surfaces at this location (locally known as the "Big Turn"), a very wide and sharp turn on a steep hill. $107,332

**Union County: Pedestrian and Vehicular Safety Improvements at the Intersections of Broad Street & Summit Avenue and Springfield & Summit avenues in Summit**
This project will upgrade intersections and signals, align left turn lanes and install countdown pedestrian signals with push button activation and high-visibility crosswalks. Broad Street and Summit Avenue is the principal crossing for commuters going from the municipal parking garage to the train station. Plans call for the installation of a left turn only signal, new crosswalk markings and upgraded handicap ramps. Springfield-Summit Avenue is an extremely busy downtown business district intersection. Traffic calming measures will be implemented to slow traffic and increase driver awareness. $369,639

*The following High Risk Rural Roads Program projects are being funded in FY 2009, totaling almost $1 million:*

**Sussex County: Rural Road Skid Resistance Enhancements on County Routes 517 and 650 in Vernon and Wantage; and 517, 565 and 620 in Vernon, Wantage and Sparta**
Anti-skid surfaces will be installed to help prevent vehicles from leaving the roadway and crossing into opposing lanes. New oversized signage will be installed; pavement colors will be varied to enhance driver awareness and better delineate traveling lanes; and guide rails with reflectors will be added. $95,146 and $142,496 respectively.

**Warren County: Safety Improvements on County Routes 519 in Harmony and White; 611 in Liberty and Hope; and 616 in Blairstown**
Existing road signs will be upgraded with ultra-high performance reflective sheeting. Pavement will be marked to ensure higher reflectivity in both dry and wet conditions and roadway edge lines will be widened from 4 to 8 inches. Rumble strips will be installed as needed to alert drivers who are drifting into opposing lanes. $357,000, $284,000 and $89,000 respectively.

# The "Rest" of the Story on Truck Stops

Early morning commuters on Interstate 78 in Somerset County come across a scene that has become a daily ritual in recent years. Dozens of trucks that parked along the highway shoulders the previous night begin to creep onto the highway and get on the move before the peak of the morning rush begins.

Parking on highway shoulders is a dangerous practice, both to commuters and truckers. But the lack of legal overnight parking for trucks in northern New Jersey has made it a necessary last resort for growing numbers of weary truckers.

On I-78, it's a particular problem. The roadway carries substantial truck traffic throughout each day, due to its role as a key highway link between the greater New York area and the warehouses and distribution centers in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley and points beyond. The highway serves as the primary east-west truck route for northern New Jersey's busy port facilities and rail terminals.

Shoulder parking presents a dilemma for law enforcement officials, who must choose between tolerating the dangers it poses to passing motorists or creating other hazards by requiring possibly overtired drivers to find other parking—while violating their federal hours-of-service limits.

There are nearly 1,400 truck parking spaces in the region, but there is a projected demand for another 1,300, according to information in the NJTPA's North Jersey Truck Stop Study, completed in January.

The volume of truck traffic in this region is projected to grow along with the population and the economy, compounding the problem in the coming years. The study looked at truck traffic data and use of existing facilities in an effort to identify areas where truck parking would best serve the drivers' needs. It also included extensive surveys of the trucking industry and drivers regarding the need for rest stops.

Two sites on the New Jersey Turnpike were identified as potential locations for expanded parking: the Vince Lombardi Service Area in Ridgefield, Bergen County, and the Molly Pitcher Service Area in Cranbury, Middlesex County

In addition, the study recommends further analysis in the area of the interchange between I-78 and I-95 near the Port of Newark/Elizabeth. However, since these recommendations would only meet some of the region's truck parking demand, the study calls for ongoing work to identify other locations as well.

The complete NJTPA study is available at www.njrest.org. ●

*The North Jersey Truck Rest Stop Study recommends sites where desperately needed parking spaces may be added.*

# Police Buckle Down to Raise Seat Belt Awareness

The state's seat belt usage rate recently reached an all-time high of 91.75 percent, according to an observational survey conducted by the New Jersey Institute of Technology following this summer's Click It or Ticket mobilization.

In May and June, New Jersey's law enforcement agencies, with help from the state Division of Law and Public Safety, conducted a Click It or Ticket enforcement effort to get drivers and their passengers to buckle up. Similar efforts took place nationwide.

During Click It or Ticket campaigns, police conduct zero-tolerance enforcement of seat belt laws. Public relations efforts by government agencies, local coalitions and school officials are combined with paid advertising campaigns to increase awareness of the importance of seat belt use in preventing serious injuries or deaths in crashes. Most people buckle up for safety, law enforcement officials say, but for some, it's the threat of a ticket that apparently gets them to fasten their seat belts.

Nearly 500 (or 95 percent) of the state's police agencies participated in this summer's Click It or Ticket. As a result of the two-week initiative, 46,026 seat belt tickets were issued, down from 58,170 in 2007. In addition, police issued 6,831 tickets for speeding, 2,598 for driving with a suspended license, 1,345 to uninsured drivers, 1,007 tickets for improper use of child restraints, 684 for drug-related charges, 642 for drunk driving and 449 for reckless driving.

This is the 12th consecutive year the state's seat belt usage rate has increased. The seat belt usage rate hit a previous state high of 91.4 percent in May 2007.

Middlesex County had the highest overall usage rate in the state this year at 94.53 percent. Monmouth County's rate jumped the furthest, up 5.2 percent from 2007 to 93.35 percent. ●

# Making Rail Crossings Safer

Moving goods by rail is considered both environmentally friendly and energy efficient. Yet in a congested region like northern New Jersey, freight trains can pose a deadly hazard to drivers and pedestrians who don't act with caution while crossing the tracks.

The volume of freight moving through northern and central New Jersey is projected to double over the next 25 years. Much of that growth will come by the region's railroads, which cross busy highways as well as neighborhood streets, and therefore must be considered from a safety perspective.

With this in mind, the NJTPA last year began its Freight Rail Crossing Assessment Study. The now-completed study will help address the impacts—including those that are safety-related—of the anticipated freight rail traffic along the region's major rail lines.

"Our freight rail lines are already very busy; we know an increase in freight traffic will mean delays at grade crossings and raise quality-of-life issues in communities where these crossings are located," said Somerset County Freeholder Peter S. Palmer, who chairs the Freight Initiatives Committee. "This study will help us keep ahead of the curve.

To carry out the study, the NJTPA has been working for the past year with a consultant team. The final study compiled a database of rail crossings in the region; this database will eventually be made available to other county and state agencies. In addition, the study includes enhanced data compiled on crossings along the major rail lines in the NJTPA region: the Lehigh, West Trenton, Chemical Coast Secondary, Port Reading Secondary and River lines.

Data analysis has included not only rail crossing vehicular traffic, but accident statistics, duration of delays, surrounding land use issues, and anticipated rail operating conditions. Strategies for reducing local impacts at more than a dozen of the most severely impacted locations will be explored by the NJTPA in future planning efforts.

The completed study is available on the NJTPA's website, www.njtpa.org.

*A recently completed NJTPA study examines the safety impacts of increased freight rail traffic.*

# Agencies Draw on Arts to Illustrate Rail Dangers

It's been a "banner" year for agencies using artwork to urge pedestrians to show caution around rail crossings.

NJ Transit began a public outreach campaign this summer that used fliers and attention-grabbing signs to warn riders not to ignore the gates at grade crossings. A vivid reminder of the dangers was a banner hung at selected stations that read, "What goes around, comes around," and showed an illustration of a tarp-covered body next to the tracks.

NJ Transit also began work on a railroad safety pilot program aimed to augment driver's education courses in New Jersey high schools. The agency teamed with six schools to develop the workshop materials, including a state-specific PowerPoint presentation and a video supplied by the national rail safety organization, Operation Lifesaver.

Operation Lifesaver is a non-profit, international education program established in 1972 to end collisions, deaths and injuries at places where roadways cross train tracks and on railroad rights-of-way. The organization estimates that approximately every two hours in the U.S., a person or vehicle is hit by a train, and about half of all accidents occur at roadway-rail intersections equipped with flashing lights and/or gates.

*An Operation Lifesaver poster geared toward youths.*

The organization's volunteers make presentations and distribute educational brochures, posters, videos, coloring books for children, and training information—all aimed at increasing public safety around railroad tracks. Operation Lifesaver's public awareness programs are sponsored cooperatively by federal, state and local government agencies—including the New Jersey Department of Transportation, as well as highway safety organizations and the nation's railroads.

Operation Lifesaver in May unveiled its latest safety brochure which, for the first time, offers safety tips for all types of passenger trains, from subway cars to high-speed trains. The brochure offers tips including how to navigate safely in the area of passenger rail tracks and trains, how to be safe onboard trains, and how to be safe at stations and on platforms.

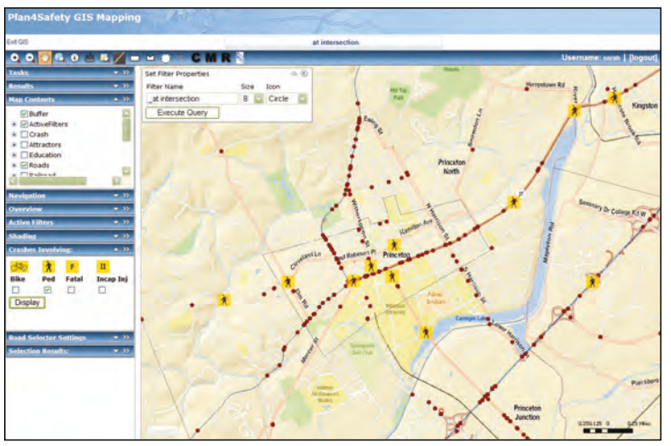
For more on Operation Lifesaver, visit www.oli.org.

# Tool Compiles Data Fast for Safety Professionals

Analyzing a road's crash trends has long involved the tedious work of sifting through documents or non-friendly databases. Now Plan4Safety is performing what was once several days of work in a couple of clicks of a mouse.

Plan4Safety is an online analysis and decision-support tool developed for the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). It was created by the Transportation Safety Resource Center (TSRC), a program of Rutgers University's Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation.

Plan4Safety gives planners and safety professionals the ability to instantly complete searches ranging in detail from the total number of crashes statewide in a given year to the number and exact locations of fatal deer crashes at a specific intersection at a certain time of day. Crash sites can be displayed on road or satellite maps, and data can be easily exported using Excel.




Sarah Weissman, a traffic engineer and program manager at the TSRC, said the tool is helping safety professionals complete their work faster and more efficiently.

"In the past, people would essentially spend 99 percent of their time finding what they're looking for, and in the end, there would be very little time left to spend fixing the problem," Weissman said.

The software has even been used for purposes not originally envisioned by its creators. She mentioned one example in which a corporation requested information about routes that experience frequent crashes so they could advise their truck drivers to avoid them. In another case, a parent requested Plan4Safety data to help come up with safe walking routes to schools in her local district.

The NJTPA recently used Plan4Safety to assist in locating high-risk road segments for its Regional Safety Priorities Update (see story on page 7).

Plan4Safety allows its users to filter data using 144 criteria found in police reports, such as crash type, the kind of vehicles involved and the levels of injuries or property damage sustained. Nearly 1.3 million New Jersey crash records from 2003 to 2006 are currently stored in the system, and later this year, it will incorporate data from 2007, bringing the available records to more than 1.6 million.

For now, Plan4Safety is only accessible to public employees with a legitimate need to use it. Those interested in obtaining data generated from Plan4Safety can contact Weissman to have their requests considered.

For more information on Plan4Safety, visit plan4safety.rutgers.edu or e-mail Sarah Weissman at scweiss@rci.rutgers.edu.

# Roadway Guidance Safety Studies Show Surprising Results

Recent research suggests that some of the most common devices used to lower crash rates may actually accomplish the opposite. A Canadian researcher compiled several studies on improving roadway visibility and guidance and found that these measures often lead to increased speeds and crashes.

The researcher attributed the findings to "driver adaptation"— if driving is made easier, the driver will change their behavior. While reflectors mounted on roadside posts and the pavement help guide drivers at night, they also give them the confidence to drive faster and lead to more crashes, according to the report.

Guidance improvements that aren't visible do not embolden drivers to speed and were therefore suggested as more effective. Rumble strips, which give an audible warning and rattle the vehicle, were mentioned as an effective means to help distracted or fatigued drivers. Statistics show rumble strips on the road shoulder reduce run-off-road crashes by 21 percent, and those along the centerline reduce frontal-impact crashes by 25 percent.

The report noted that the Dutch use fewer guidance aids on busy neighborhood streets because they believe it makes drivers uncertain about the proper right-of-ways, causing them to slow down. A similar school of thought involves the roundabout, which entails a heavier workload for drivers. The intimidation factor of navigating roundabouts is believed to encourage drivers to slow down and observe all of their surroundings. When roundabouts replace signalized intersections, crashes have been shown to drop by one-third.

*Research indicates roundabouts, like the one seen here in Bound Brook, Somerset County, can significantly reduce crashes.*

The research was conducted by Alison Smiley, president of Human Factors North, Inc., Toronto, and published in the January-February issue of TR News. For more, visit www.trb.org.

# Safety Tips

## 12 Months of Traffic Safety

The 12 Months of Traffic Safety is a public outreach campaign that highlights a different traffic safety issue each month of the year. Informational brochures are specific to New Jersey and are available for download at Rutgers University's Transportation Safety Resource Center at **www.tsrc.rutgers.edu**. To request a brochure, e-mail Sarah Weissman at **scweiss@rci.rutgers.edu**.

### Safety Issues Highlighted Have Included:

Aggressive Driving

Bus & Train Safety

Child Passenger Safety

Inclement Weather

Driver Inattention

Drowsy Driving

Impaired Driving

Helmets and Wheels

Intersection Safety

Motorcycle Safety

Occupant Protection

Pedestrian & Bicycle Safety

School Bus Safety

Senior Safety

Truck Safety

Work Zone Safety

Young Drivers

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

**Slow down, stay alert, and save a life . . .**
**It might even be your own!**

### Pedestrian and Bike Responsibilities:

- Be Alert. Drivers don't always see you.
- Children under 14 are required to wear a helmet when bicycling.

### Motorist Responsibilities:

- Motorists are required to afford bicyclists the same respect on the road as they do other vehicles.
- Always yield to pedestrians in crosswalks (marked or unmarked). It's the law!
- Obey the speed limit.
- Keep your windshield clean and visibility good.

### Other Resources Include:

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center
**www.pedbikeinfo.org**

Project for Public Spaces Traffic Calming 101 **www.pps.org**

## Drunk and Impaired Driving

The intoxicated driver blood alcohol concentration (BAC) in New Jersey is .08 percent. BAC is determined by four factors: quantity of alcohol consumed; body weight; how quickly drinks were consumed; and food eaten. As your BAC level rises, expect:

- A decline in your ability to perform two or more tasks at the same time
- Increasingly blurred vision
- Reduced coordination, ability to track moving objects and response to emergency driving situations
- Short-term memory loss or lapses, speed control problems and impaired perception

Also be aware that prescription and over the counter medications can impair your ability to drive safely. Read labels carefully or consult your pharmacist.

- Drive Sober
- Be a Designated Driver
- Don't Let your Friends Drive Drunk

## Stop Aggressive Driving

**Reduce your stress when you drive! Be a courteous driver!**

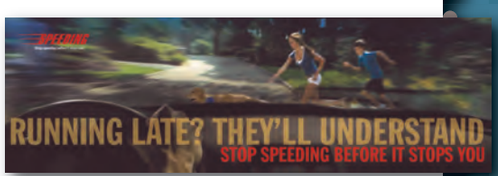
Aggressive driving is a combination of deliberate actions and/or hostile behaviors by a motorist who endangers other drivers or property without regard for public safety.

### Who Are They? Here's What We Know About Them:

- High-risk drivers climb into the anonymity of a motor vehicle and take out their frustrations on fellow motorists.
- Frustration levels are high, while their concern for fellow motorists is low.
- They run stop signs and red lights, speed, tailgate, weave in and out of traffic, pass on the right, make improper and erratic lane changes, make hand and facial gestures, scream, honk and flash their headlights.

### When Confronted by Aggressive Drivers:

- First and foremost, make every attempt to get out of their way.
- Put your pride in the back seat. Do not challenge them by speeding up or attempting to hold your own in your travel lane.
- Wear your seat belt. It will hold you in your seat and behind the wheel in case you need to make an abrupt driving maneuver and will protect you in a crash.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Ignore gestures and do no make your own gestures.
- Report aggressive drivers to the appropriate authorities with a vehicle description, license plate number and location.




### Take Five to Stay Alive:

- Allow extra time to avoid rushing and stress
- Buckle everyone's seatbelt before driving
- Be a friendly driver to others on the road
- Be aware that distractions are a leading cause of crashes
- Get to your destination safely

### For Additional Information, Please Visit:

NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety
**www.njsaferoads.com**

NJDOT **www.state.nj.us/transportation**

American Automobile Association (AAA)
**www.aaa.com**

## Bus and Train Safety

**Safety is everyone's responsibility!**

### Tips for Bus Safety:

- While waiting for a bus, always stand behind the curb.
- Don't walk in front of the bus, even if it is stopped.
- Yield to buses—it's the law. Failure to yield right-of-way to buses re-entering traffic can result in a fine of up to $200.

### Tips for Train Safety:

- Trains can't stop quickly—most take at least 1,500 feet to come to a complete rest.
- Never go around the gates at a grade crossing. This law applies to everyone, whether in a car, on a bicycle or

For more information: NJ Transit Rail Safety Department (973) 491-7953.

Photos Courtesy of National Highway Safety Administration, Operation Lifesaver and the Rutgers Transportation Safey Response Center

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TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN THE NJTPA REGION

# Mobility Matters

## In This Issue

*Safety Comes First*
- *NJTPA Safety Programs*
- *Deer Crash Awareness*

**North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority, Inc.**
*www.njtpa.org*

*Police and planners work together to make a road safer in Newton, Sussex County.*